



# A COMPACT DECODING OF ESSENTIAL COMPETENCE FOR TODAY'S ELT PRACTITIONERS

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## ABSTRACT

With the world shrinking into a global village, today's ELT practitioners, unlike yesteryears, need not have merely linguistic or systemic competence for effective teaching in an EFL or ESL classroom. This study hypothesizes that, an ideal ELT practitioner, needs to possess multidimensional competence of six types, namely: Systemic, Strategic, Sociolinguistic, Inter-cultural, Communicative, and Research competence. To maximize teachability of an ELT practitioner and learnability of a learner, the study here presents a brief account of the six types of competence as a quick reference for prospective ELT practitioners and expects them to imbibe these six competence as prerequisites of becoming ideal ELT practitioners. The required data were collected through content analysis; whereas, analytic induction was used to analyze the data.

**KEYWORDS:** essential competence, systemic competence, strategic competence, sociolinguistic competence, inter-cultural competence, communicative competence, and research competence.

## INTRODUCTION:

With new insights, the field of ELT is changing unprecedentedly in terms of pedagogical approaches, curricula, blended use of technology, views and roles of ELT practitioners, ELT management, ELT job criteria, etc. The ELT world is not merely concerned with developing language skills of the learners by asking them to mimic native English; rather, the need of the hour is whether or not ELT practitioners vis-à-vis ELT courses orient learners to be constructive social change agents with awareness of world issues; and gear their communication skills to respond to the changes with analytical, complex, and critical thinking. Taking a holistic account of the changes in the ELT world, this study hypothesizes that an ELT practitioner plays a centre stage role in terms of success or failure of learners' learning. Therefore, the prime objective of this brief exploratory study is to explore essential competence prospective ELT practitioners. In what follows, the paper presents a compact overview in the form of literature review of the six essential competences.

### Essential Competence:

For the ultimate attainment in a second language acquisition, an ideal ELT practitioner needs to possess at least six types of competence as they are the mainstay of modern prerequisites for effective teaching and learning according to current language researchers like Diaz-Rico & Weed (2006), Canale (1983), Johnson, (2008), etc. For English language educators, the most problematic aspect of defining English as an international language remains the notion of competence (Nunn, 2005).

#### a. Linguistic/Systemic Competence:

The term linguistic competence was firstly introduced by Chomsky (1965) to distinguish it from his notion of performance. Since, Chomsky's linguistic competence lacked consideration of the most important linguistic ability of being able to produce and comprehend utterances which are appropriate to the context in which they are made, the concept of linguistic competence was confined and related to the term systemic competence by many scholars like Johnson (2008), Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980) in the sense that an L2 learner requires to have a profound knowledge of phonology, morphology & syntax, semantics, and mechanical skills like handwriting, spelling, punctuation, etc. It is imperative to add here that systemic competence and grammatical competence mean the same for many scholars and they are interchangeably used with reference to phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic rules and lexical items.

#### b. Communicative Competence (Performance)

Communicative competence which though was firstly introduced by Hymes (1972) as a resistance to the concept of systemic competence and the term was later defined by Canale and Swain (1980) define it as a blend of four vital areas: words and rules, appropriacy, cohesion and coherence, and the use of communication strategies. This study has used the notion of communicative competence in a slightly narrowed sense that is one's ability of not just having systemic or linguistic competence rather more so of Chomsky's notion of performance. It is also used as a delivery of coherent text.

#### c. Sociolinguistic Competence:

Sociolinguistic competence is knowing the rules of use or appropriateness in social situation Johnson (2008). In other words, it refers to the learning of pragmatic aspect of various speech acts, namely, the cultural values, norms, and other socio-cultural conventions in social contexts. They are the context and topic of

discourse, the participants' social status, sex, and age, and other factors which influence styles and registers of speech. Since different situations call for different type of expressions as well as different beliefs, views, values, and attitudes, the understanding of sociolinguistic competence is indispensable for today's ELT practitioners (Nunn, 2005). Sociolinguistic competence is also interchangeably used for discourse competence by many scholars to encompass the knowledge of rules regarding the cohesion (grammatical links) and coherence (appropriate combination of communicative functions) of various types of discourse. Sociolinguistic rules of use and rules of discourse are crucial in interpreting utterances for social meaning, particularly when the literal meaning of an utterance does not lead to the speaker's intention easily (Canale and Swain, 1980).

#### d. Strategic Competence:

Strategic competence is one's ability to repair communication breakdowns for lack of knowledge of grammar and social communication norms. The breakdowns are normally repaired by using paraphrase, synonyms, gestures, context clues etc. Strategic competence is to do with the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal strategies to compensate for breakdowns such as self-correction and at the same time to enhance the effectiveness of communication such as recognizing discourse structure, activating background knowledge, contextual guessing, and tolerating ambiguity (Nunn, 2005).

#### e. Inter-cultural Competence:

To use a second language like English in various social and cross-cultural communication, today's ELT practitioners must possess inter-cultural competence. Intercultural competence is one's skills of getting along, working, and learning with people of diverse cultures as it helps learners view the world from others' perspectives and meet the desired behaviours of the learners from different ethnic groups in EFL classrooms. In a modern world, where formerly distinct ways of living are brought increasingly into intense contact where people from different cultures have to share the same space at least virtually through computer / internet mediated interactions with experts and native speakers of the target language, the need of inter-cultural has become more urgent (Neddar, 2011).

#### f. Research Competence:

By research competence, the researcher here expects an ideal ELT practitioner to have an adequate amount of competence that could be used to understand the impediments in effective teaching and learning inside and outside an EFL or ESL classroom from both causal and remedial perspectives (Jha, 2014). More precisely, It is a procedural knowledge for the teachers and it also necessitates learners to develop an instinct of a researcher in terms of introspection and retrospection over errors and right usage of the acquired knowledge.

## CONCLUSION:

To conclude, the paper (presented as a brief report) gives a brief account of multidimensional competence of six types, namely: systemic, strategic, sociolinguistic, inter-cultural, communicative, and research competence as prerequisites of becoming ideal ELT practitioners. The rationale behind disseminating the compact decoding of six types of competence was to maximize teachability of an ELT practitioner and learnability of an EFL / ESL learner. This quick reference of six types of competence will help one in deciding what to include and what to exclude for the efficacy of teaching, curriculum and teaching materials.

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